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### Have you heard? The role of rumour during organisational change processes

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### Abstract

This paper discusses the results of a study of communication and rumour among frontline staff during an organisational change at a large Australian metropolitan university, and relates the findings to the literature and research surrounding rumour during organisational changes. Secondly, it describes the measures undertaken in a second organisational change, as a result of these lessons learned, to minimise the amount of rumour circulating and address their basic content.

### Keywords

during, rumour, role, heard, have, processes, you, change, organisational

### Disciplines

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# Have You Heard? The Role of Rumour During Organisational Change Processes

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**Abstract:** This paper discusses the results of a study of communication and rumour among frontline staff during an organisational change at a large Australian metropolitan university, and relates the findings to the literature and research surrounding rumour during organisational changes. Secondly, it describes the measures undertaken in a second organisational change, as a result of these lessons learned, to minimise the amount of rumour circulating and address their basic content.

**Keywords:** Change Management, Rumour, Organisational Change, Communication, Higher Education, Organisational Behaviour

## Introduction

**I**N THE NEW millennium, education is continuing its rise as a competitive and global business (Gomes and Murphy, 2003; Mazzarol et al. 2003). Organisational changes to respond or preempt external and internal pressures in higher education (HE) are arguably becoming just as familiar in tertiary institutions as within corporate organisations. In Australia, the relatively low level of expenditure on HE compared to other first-world nations (Murdoch, 2001), combined with increased competition for students in an increasingly business-like model of operations, means that organisational change in universities is inevitable and increasing.

Despite the increasing instances of organisational change in the HE sector, relatively few studies have been conducted in comparison with the corporate environment. It remains largely unknown whether the findings evolving from organisational change within business are directly transferrable to the HE context; there are some unique differences that distinguish it from the corporate environment which may problematise the direct transference of research findings. For example, HE's role as societal educator and independent researcher. This study's specific examination of change events in the HE sector serve to contribute to an understanding of whether and how university change experiences might differ from corporate change events.

The importance of rumour in the formation of employees' attitudes towards their organisation as well as the role of rumour in reflecting employees' change-related concerns has been well documented (e.g. Bordia et al., 2006; Garnett, 1992). A greater understanding of the role of rumour in organisational

change within the higher education sector would assist in the effective management of change within this environment.

This study discusses two separate organisational change events within the HE sector in light of the predominance of business literature surrounding rumour during times of organisational change. The study examines how rumour influenced key perceptions and reactions to a change event, and, through the cyclical process of action research, discusses the application of the findings about the causes and management of rumour to a second organisational change event.

## Research into Communication and Rumour during Organisational Change

Although authors such as Lewin (1951), Kotter (1996) and Luecke (2003) have proposed alternate models for change, all can be seen to share at least three common phases - a starting state, a neutral or transition phase, and a changed state. William Bridges (2003) highlights the crucial difference between change and transition, noting that change is the external and visible outcome and transition is how the individual makes sense of that change and adjusts accordingly. Due to the highly complex nature of these adjustments, both personal and work related, Bridges emphasises the importance for timely, reliable and ongoing communication during the change process.

Management research has indicated that the success of a change event is influenced by the quantity and quality of communication undertaken between those responsible for the changes and affected staff (DiFonzo and Bordia, 1998; Lewis, 1999). Klein





(1996) noted that "officially sanctioned" information should flow through the organisational hierarchy in order to enhance accuracy of information transmission. Similarly, Postmes, Tanis, and de Wit (2001) reported that communication with senior staff about formal aspects of the change was a predictor of staff commitment, while communication with peers and direct supervisors about socio-emotional content predicted employee lack of commitment to the changes.

Wim Elving (2005) argued that one of the main goals of organisational communication during change is to prevent employee resistance to the changes. This goal, combined with the apparent negative predictive effect of communication with peers and on socio-emotional content, suggests that rumour has a strong role to play in the success of organisational change. Indeed, there has been interest since the 1950s in the effect of organisational change on rumour among employees and methodologies for studying rumour (for example, Back et al., 1950). Despite this interest, there have been relatively few studies examining the role of rumour in organisational change in higher education.

In the business context, several studies in change management have demonstrated that rumour is a major information source for employees regarding their organisation (e.g. Gamett, 1992; and Harcourt et al., 1991). Furthermore, rumours are reported to dramatically increase during an organisational change environment (DiFonzo et al., 1994; Hellweg, 1987; Isabella, 1990; Jaeger et al., 1980; Michelson et al., 2004). Organisational changes herald issues of intense topical importance to employees, and rumours can be seen as expressing the change-related concerns of employees (Bordia et al., 2006).

Although multiple definitions of rumour and its associated terms gossip, hearsay and the grapevine can be found in the literature (e.g. Burke & Wise 2003; Kurland & Pelled, 2000; Peters, 2004; and Smith, 1996), this study has adopted Bordia et al's (2006) definition. Bordia et al. define rumours as "unverified statements ... about issues of considerable topical importance." p. 602.

Rumour has been acknowledged as a critical input in the development of staff attitudes towards organisational changes and playing an important role in effective change management (Larkin & Larkin, 1994; Smeltzer, 1991). Rumour, therefore, has a critical role to play in monitoring employee reaction and attitude to an organisational change and could potentially be used as a mechanism for change leaders and advocates to monitor and pre-empt issues which may sabotage or improve the success of the change.

## Study Overview

This study incorporates an action research methodology to investigate the role of rumour in an organisational change process within a large Australian metropolitan university. The findings derived from the first organisational change event were subsequently applied to a second, separate and unrelated organisational change event two years later.

### Pilot Study: Department X

The initial pilot study of an organisational change in "Department X" of a large Australian metropolitan university is explored in detail and evaluates questions about the role of rumour in times of organisational change, such as: rumour frequency; rumour versus formal communication and lastly, actual and preferred sources of information regarding the proposed restructure. Specifically, it examines the degree of communication provided by a university department's Executive team, including the Change Manager, and the resulting type and level of rumour among departmental staff during the implementation of the planned restructure during August 2004.

### Application of Findings: Department Y

The findings from the pilot study were applied to a second organisational restructure, in 2006. This second change event involved a student recruitment office ("Department Y") located within the same university and consisting of approximately 35 staff. The new structure for Department Y called for significant job scope changes for approximately two thirds of the positions, while the overall number of positions remained unchanged. The changes to some positions were so significant that the skills, knowledge and qualifications bore little resemblance or relationship to the former job descriptions.

This change event is discussed to illustrate how the findings about the role of rumour from the first change translated into strategies undertaken in the second.

## Methodology

Two separate organisational change events are investigated, through action research involving a cyclical method of observing, evaluating and reflecting on a Pilot Study prior to planning and implementing the next cycle (O'Brien: 2001). Data for the Pilot Study (Department X) was collected during mid 2004, and applied to the second change event (Department Y) in 2006. One author had the opportunity to participate in and evaluate both change management events as participant-observer.

## The Pilot Study

The following research questions were used to guide the investigation into the role of rumour in organisational change during the Pilot Study:

- How much information do frontline staff require from different sources (particularly formal sources) during the restructure? How much information was actually provided by the same sources?
- What was the amount of information received on various topics surrounding the organisational changes during the restructure? Was this consistent with what frontline staff required?
- Do staff perceive rumours as an accurate source of information?

In order to address the research questions, an anonymous online survey was designed and distributed, incorporating the organisational communication audit methodology outlined by Clampitt (as cited in Hargie and Tourish, 2000) and Goldhaber (2002). Further information regarding the online survey is contained in Appendix A. The specific survey questions discussed in this paper reflect the types classified by Bordia et al (see Appendix A for details).

The survey data garnered from the sampled population ( $N = 9$ , return rate = 75%) was examined using the software package SPSS for Windows  $\square$  (Vers 15.0) incorporating paired samples  $t$  test.

To complement the survey, and to provide further insights into the role and impact of rumour, a timeline of records of formal communication about the restructure were examined. These records included emails, the departmental website, the author's meeting notes and memos.

## Results/Findings from Pilot

Research question for the Pilot Study: How much information did frontline staff require from different sources (particularly formal sources) during the restructure? How much information was provided by the same sources?

The first research question sought to investigate whether key liaison staff considered the degree of communication provided from various levels of organisational hierarchy and formal records to be adequate during the departmental restructure. It also examined the information gap between various sources of formal and informal information during the restructure.

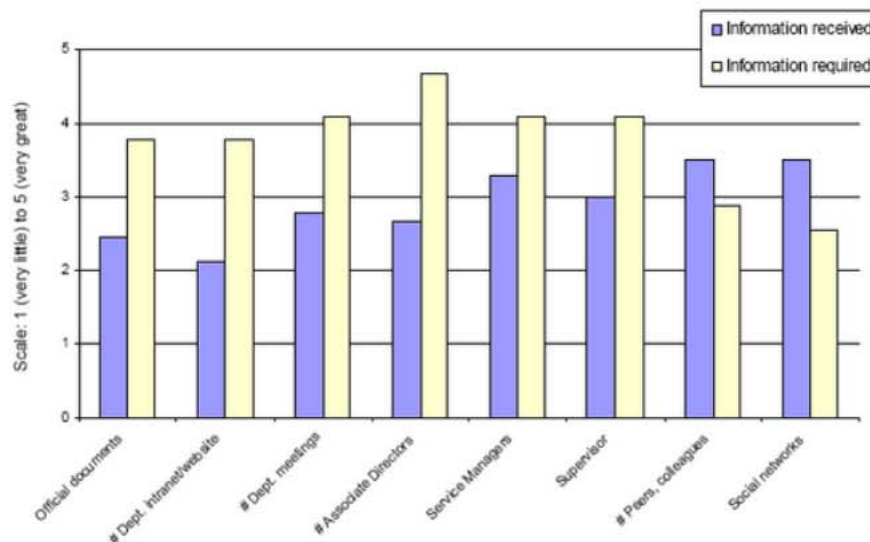


Fig. 1: Survey Results from Pilot Study Showing Mean Amount of Information Received Versus Required from different Sources. # Significant at  $p < 0.05$

Generally, for all sources of information (excluding peers/colleagues) the amount received was perceived by the participants as inadequate, compared to the level of information actually required (Figure 1). To ascertain overall significance, paired sample  $t$  tests were undertaken between the perceived degree of information received and that required by the respondents. While the amount of information provided through official documents received a mean of 2.44 ( $SD = 1.13$ ), this was not significantly different to

the amount of information participants perceived they required (Mean = 3.78  $SD = 0.83$ ). Similarly, sources of information relatively close to the respondents, including Service Managers, supervisors and social networks (Mean = 3, 3.3, 3.5;  $SD = 1.11, 1.22, 1.24$  respectively), were not significantly different in terms of amount of overall information received and amount required. In contrast, more "distant" information sources such as the Departmental intranet/website and department meetings (both sources



controlled by the Department's Executive), and Associate Directors, were rated as significantly different in terms of providing less information than required

(Table 2). Peers and colleagues were rated by respondents as significantly different in terms of providing more information than required (Table 2).

Table 2: Paired Sample t Test Results from the Pilot Study Questions Regarding Information Received versus Required from Various Sources

	Information received Mean	Information required Mean
Dept. intranet/website	2.11 (SD = 1.16)	3.78 (SD = 0.97)
	(t (9) = -2.89, p<0.05)	
Dept. Meetings	2.78 (SD = 0.83)	4.1 (SD = 0.6)
	(t (9) = -4.62, p<0.05)	
Assoc. Directors	2.67 (SD = 1.32)	4.67 (SD = 0.5)
	(t (9) = -4.90, p<0.05)	
Peers, colleagues	3.5 (SD = 1.13)	2.89 (SD = 1.03)
	(t (9) = 2.31, p<0.05)	

Research Question: What was the amount of information received on various topics surrounding the organisational changes during the Pilot restructure?

Was this consistent with what frontline staff required?

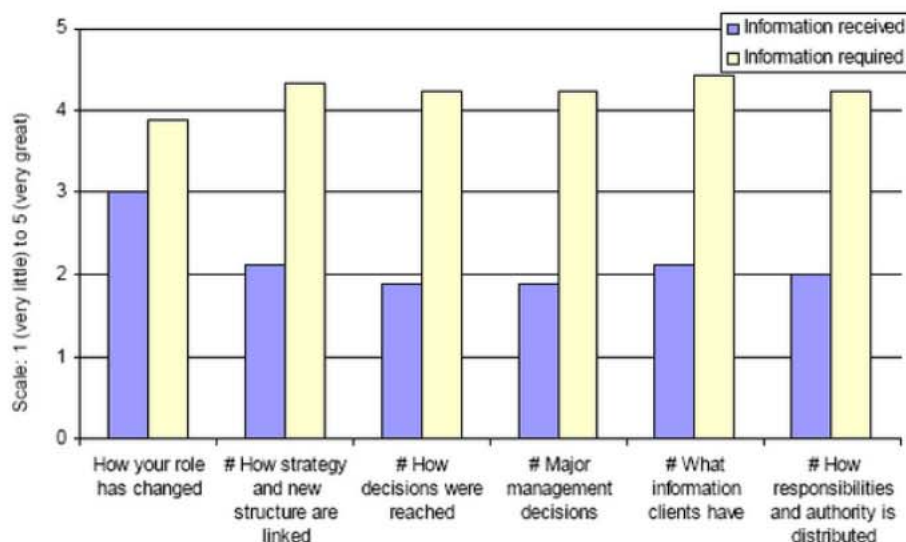


Fig. 2: Pilot Study Survey Results Showing Mean Amount of Information Received Versus Amount Required on Specific Restructuring Issues. # Significant at p<0.05

Figure 2 illustrates how much information respondents perceived they received and the amount of information they considered they required by specific topic. Results illustrate that participant's received "little" information about strategy and major decisions and required a greater degree of information (reporting a "great" to "very great" need for information on various strategic and change issues).

As before, paired sample t tests were undertaken between the perceived degree of information received and that required by the respondents to determine

the level of statistical significance. Information about how staff roles had changed received a mean of 3 (SD = 1.32), however, this was not significantly different to the amount of information participants perceived they required. In contrast, all other restructure information themes such as linkage between strategy and structure, decision making processes, what clients know and the distribution of authority and responsibility were all rated by respondents as significantly different in terms of receiving less information than required (Table 3).

Table 3: Paired Sample t Test Results from the Case Study Questions Regarding Information Received versus Required on Various Rumour Themes

	Information received Mean	Information required Mean
How strategy and new structure are linked	2.11 (SD = 1.05)	4.33 (SD = 0.5)
	(t (9) = -4.78, p<0.05)	
How decisions are reached	1.89 (SD = 1.17)	4.22 (SD = 0.44)
	(t (9) = -5.29, p<0.05)	
Major management decisions	1.89 (SD = 1.05)	4.22 (SD = 0.67)
	(t (9) = -4.95, p<0.05)	
What information clients have	2.11 (SD = 1.17)	4.44 (SD = 0.73)
	(t (9) = -4.22, p<0.05)	
How responsibility and authority is distributed	2.0 (SD = 0.71)	4.22 (SD = 0.97)
	(t (9) = -4.78, p<0.05)	

Research Question: Do staff in the Pilot Study perceive rumours as an accurate source of information?

Six survey questions were designed to investigate the amount and reliability/credibility of information gleaned from grapevine discussions.

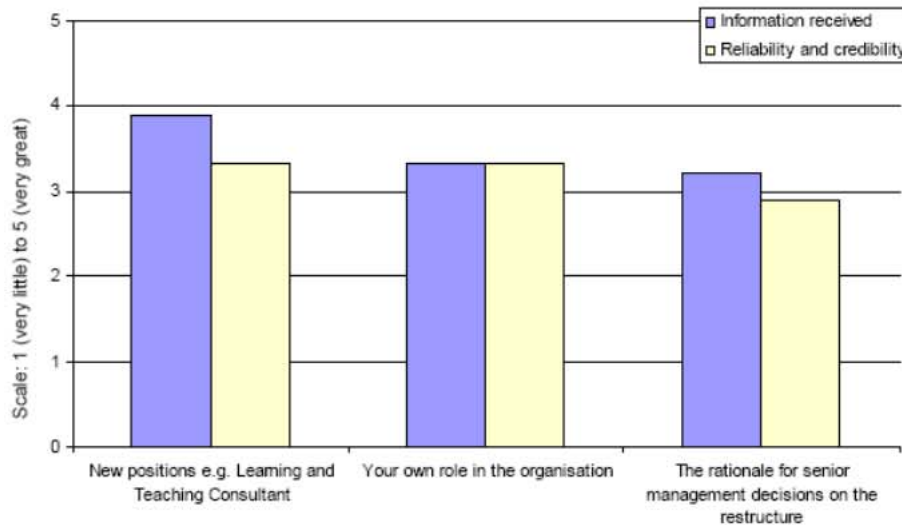


Fig. 3: Pilot Study Survey Results Concerning the Mean Amount of Information Gained from Rumour, Together with Mean Reliability and Credibility Ratings for the Same Topics

The level of information received and overall reliability/credibility were broadly rated as similar by the respondents. The greatest observed difference was related to rumours about the rationale for senior

management decisions on the restructure. Table 4 outlines the means and standard deviations for the tested rumour thematic.



Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviations Rating the Amount Information Received and the Overall Reliability/Credibility Regarding Specific Rumour Themes during the Pilot

	Information Received Mean	Reliability and Credibility Mean
New positions e.g. Learning and Teaching Consultant	3.89 (SD = 1.05)	3.33 (SD = 1.22)
Your own role in the organisation	3.33 (SD = 1.12)	3.33 (SD = 1.22)
The rationale for senior management decisions on the restructure	3.22 (SD = 1.2)	2.89 (SD = 1.53)

As part of an action research cycle, the findings from the Pilot described above were applied to communication. Strategies designed to manage rumour and improve formal communication during the change event.

### Approach Adopted for Department Y

As a result of the findings from the pilot study, specific change management practices and formal information mechanisms were developed for implementation in Department Y two years later, which took the following format:

- fortnightly emails including a frequently-asked question (FAQ) section with any questions that had been asked during that period;
- a regular bi-weekly lunchtime meeting for different groups within the department with the Change Manager;
- an open-door policy to the Change Manager's office (situated slightly apart from the rest of the office due to space and confidentiality of visits); and an anonymous suggestion box cleared twice weekly.
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During the application of the Pilot Study findings to Department Y, the open-door policy to the Change Manager was the most frequently used by front line staff and their line managers. During key times – when the structure and job titles were being deter-

mined and the internal interviews conducted, for example – the Change Manager discussed related restructure issues with an average of 5-6 staff per day. These staff largely utilised the open door policy to discuss direct issues of concern.

The bi-weekly workgroup lunch was attended strongly early in the process. However, as the change event progressed, the group numbers significantly declined. The option of using the open door policy with the Change Manager in private could have contributed to the declining numbers in group sessions. The suggestion box was rarely used (2 suggestions in 6 months). However, the fortnightly emails – especially the FAQs concerning the more topical questions – were anecdotally reported to the Change Manager as being very useful for two reasons:

1. seeing the answers in black and white enabled a greater sense of staff trust in commitment by senior management to the responses and assurances, and
2. the FAQs diminished feelings of inhibition as staff observed that their peers had asked questions they themselves had been too embarrassed to ask.

In addition to the above communication mechanisms, the Department had set up a Change Steering Committee of staff representatives together with the Director and the Change Manager. The members of the committee were elected by the staff to represent their individual workgroups comprising approximately 5 people. All representatives were requested to maintain a high level of confidentiality regarding all proposals debated within the committee. This confidentiality was in order to allow for open discussion while avoiding confusion and stress when potential options were discussed but not endorsed by senior management during the various committee meetings. However, agenda items, actions and decisions emerging from the committee were communicated to all staff.



## Discussion

### Information Expectations during Organisational Changes

The Pilot Study of Department X indicated that restructure-related information from formal and distant sources such as the department website and intranet and the Associate Directors themselves was considered insufficient. It seems logical that staff would expect the majority of information regarding a change event to originate from the Executive team, as they had advocated for and instigated the proposed changes. It also follows that written expressions of their "official" position via website and intranet statements would have a high level of staff communication expectation and credibility. Indeed, staff had been directed to these sources for finalised positions on the organisational changes. According to the Change Management Learning Centre (2007), employees prefer to receive change event information from senior staff within the organisation. Desired communication revolves around issues such as why the change event is required; the impact of not changing; and impact on staff numbers.

Goldhaber et al. (1978) described the role of the grapevine in the absence of access to formal information. The author noted that:

"The greater the distance between communication sources and receivers in the organisations, the less the information received, the less the opportunity to request more information, the less the follow-up - the poorer the information quality, the greater the use of the grapevine, and the poorer the interpersonal relations" (p.83).

Goldhaber's summary suggests that the lower an individual staff member is within the organisational hierarchy, the further removed they are from information from senior management. This might explain the findings observed in the current Pilot Study: front-line staff expected the senior management (positions of organisational seniority or at a greater "distance") to impart the greatest degree of information concerning the restructure. However, participants indicated that they received much less information from these sources than they did through informal networks and their peers (which was rated more than sufficient).

The level of information from peers and colleagues also suggests a high level of rumour circulating the department. Although this study did not measure the change in rumour frequency before and during the change period, this result is interesting as a correlation between insufficient formal information supplied during times of change and increased rumour has been noted by several authors (Galpin, 1995;

Michelson & Mouly: 2002; Smith, 1996; Steinburg, 1992; Training & Development, 1994).

To address the issues of distance and communication identified during the Pilot Study and to manage the quantity of rumour circulating the organisation, several specific operational processes were implemented during the second change event. These included open access to the Change Manager, senior management and the Director. Discussions with the Director took the format of a regular weekly 2 hour timeslot that was set aside for staff questions concerning the proposed organisational changes. The Change Manager implemented an open-door policy whereby staff could drop in and discuss issues of concern. This allowed the Change Manager to both monitor and address rumours as they arose.

An additional mechanism designed to reduce the communication distance included a regular biweekly lunchtime meeting for different groups within the department with the Change Manager. The lunchtime events, along with the private staff visits, provided the Change Manager with an opportunity to gauge staff attitudes to the change; and staff most personally affected by the proposed organisational alterations.

### Amount of Information about the Restructure

In the Pilot Study, respondents indicated that the amount of information required about specific restructure themes was generally insufficient (Figure 2). This deficiency could be related to the expectation that the Associate Directors were responsible for imparting the specifics of the change event and that they clearly fell short of this expectation. In addition, much of the information concerning specific themes investigated in this case study were verbal – and as Figure 1 would suggest, came from less formal sources. Written information is often seen as endorsed or factual and is considered to be more likely to be acted upon and committed to.

Rumour, serving the initial objective of providing the information in a vacuum of downward communication, also becomes more acceptable as the ongoing distance leaves staff suspecting a cover-up and closed communication channels. This might explain survey responses to open comments; for example:

"What is expected of my job now as whatever I do, it doesn't appear that it is what management wants anymore...???"

"1. [I want to hear about] linkages between reasons and why certain changes were made regarding to new roles and responsibilities. 2. if it's consultative, let it be more transparent."

“more straightforward communications from senior management [and] more face to face and in office presence by senior management”

The issues with lack of formal and senior communication were the basis of the Change Manager's approach during the second change event to formally address any circulating rumours while preserving source anonymity. This took the form of a FAQ on the fortnightly staff email newsletter from the Change Manager. For example, a rumour about “senior management getting rid of our area as we don't do marketing” became an FAQ – “Q: What will happen to those staff and areas who aren't involved in marketing? A: As you can see from the structure charts, there are positions in student exchange and administration which will continue to support the university's priorities to maintain an exchange program and to provide support for marketing and in maintaining and efficient office (such as travel, HR and finance).” Rumours about specific people were not addressed in the newsletter, unless they could be addressed without referring or implying to a specific person.

### Rumour Credibility

Information from peers and colleagues during the Pilot Study was rated as more than required, and the level of reliability and credibility of grapevine information was largely perceived as accurate. Indeed, the examination of the accuracy of rumours, when compared against actual events and formal communication (within the author's records of communications, the department website etc.), also suggests that rumour was a reliable and credible source of restructure information on new positions, staff roles and rationale for management decisions.

Rumour transmission relies on the perceived credibility of both the message and its source (Kurland & Pelled, 2000). Staff evaluate the legitimacy and possible overall accuracy of a rumour before further dissemination. The dissemination of false rumours has a direct impact on the credibility of their source. In the present Pilot Study, the perceived credibility and accuracy of the rumours suggests that staff were very perceptive to unspoken agendas and power structures in being able to predict future change directions. Isabella (1990) found a similar accuracy in the predictive capacity of rumours in the beginning phase of an organisational change. Many rumours delved into the rationale for change directions and the motivations of those in positions of power within the organisation. As a general rule, the Departmental Executive did not address these rumours (with two exceptions, both when the rumour was voiced in a public forum). In some ways the lack of recognition and refuting of the rumours gave an impression of further distance (the Executive isn't

hearing about it, doesn't care or can't be bothered responding). Additionally, senior management risked a perception that they could not deny the validity of the rumour content.

The conclusions drawn from this component of study led to a greater understanding of the role of rumour in organisation change events. Consequently, during the second change event, the Change Manager ensured that the senior management of Department Y were not only cognisant of rumours circulating the organisation but were also advised on how to appropriately address the identified rumours. This activity was surprisingly more difficult to implement than the operational mechanisms previously described. At the beginning of the role, the Change Manager explained that she would report rumours (but not their source) at every Senior Management meeting for two reasons: (1) so the leadership group had a process for monitoring staff attitude to the changes and (2) so that the staff feedback (via the rumours) could be proactively addressed by their leaders. Unfortunately, in practice, bringing rumours to the attention of the leadership resulted in further challenges:

1. senior management perception that the rumours were irrelevant or beneath their notice (they are rumours, rather than the hard management currency of statistics and facts, after all!);
2. senior management resistance to accepting the rumour content as either representative of staff opinions or, where rumour reflected harshly on them, as a valid perception; and
3. often in the latter instance, where they felt rumours were unsympathetic, senior management demanded to know the source (and when the Change Manager wouldn't reveal this, would dismiss the rumour or make negative assumptions about who its author was).

In order for the management team to accept some of the realities of perception by staff, they would be required to engage in what Argyris and Schön (1974) have termed “double-loop learning”, where corrective action is taken after a questioning of a person's underlying norms and assumptions. In this case, the management would have needed to re-examine their behaviour and their assumptions about how their behaviour is being perceived. This is never an easy undertaking.

### Study Limitations

Although it is assumed that the Pilot Study survey results are based on respondents with a sound understanding of events, they could be skewed by the customer-focus culture and demographics of this group. The results are also limited in generalisability



due to the small sample size and restrictions commonly associated with quantitative data. Additionally, the gathering of data from the application of findings to the second change event was qualitative and restricted to information that the authors had access to during the action research project. As the success of the approaches employed has not yet been formally evaluated, the second case describes the participant-observer's impressions of the methods employed to address issues highlighted by the role of rumour in organisational change processes. The study does, however, act as an initial pilot for evaluating the role of rumour on staff during HE organisational change events. As such this paper is seen as an initial discussion point for further research.

## Conclusion

Results from the Pilot Study suggest that rumours during a change event in this higher education context could be explained by theories and similar observations documented within change management studies in the business context. Staff in the Pilot Study expected more information from senior management on the restructure than they received, and subsequently compensated through more informal and peer sources for information. Although staff in the Pilot Study did not value the rumours as highly as more formal sources, the rumours did appear to be credible. This distance or "circle of alienation", the positive effect of formal and senior management communication, as well as the predictive accuracy of rumour in organisational change events has previ-

ously been described in the change management literature in corporate contexts.

The findings from the Pilot Study indicate that the less-than-required formal communication and senior management/ frontline staff distanced led to a reliance on peer and social networks for change-related information. Rumour was credible and even somewhat predictive. As such, the identification of rumour provides an opportunity for change advocates to obtain proactive, formative feedback on the progress of the change event. From a change management perspective, managing rumours can be seen to be important for monitoring staff attitudes to implemented changes as well as reducing staff anxiety and, potentially, attrition.

The second change event attempted to prevent these issues through greater formal communication and access to senior staff, and greater attention to addressing rumours as they arose. Anecdotally, frontline staff and line managers appreciated the formal communication mechanisms, particularly the fortnightly newsletter and FAQs, and access to the Change Manager and Director. However, persuading senior staff that rumours were valid expressions of staff concerns proved more difficult than anticipated. This suggests that senior staff were not a) aware of the "attitude meter" benefit of rumours during change processes, b) accepting rumour as an important staff feedback mechanism and c) engaging in double-loop learning from the perceptions of their staff. Further research into how change advocates can successfully work with senior managers to harness staff feedback provided via rumours is required.

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## Appendix A: Pilot Study Survey

The survey consisted of 38 question items designed to assess staff perceptions of the level of information actually received by various departmental sources and the level of communication actually desired. Thirty six (36) items were ranked according to a 1-5 Likert scale (very little, little, some, great and very great), and two items were open-ended comments asking for suggestions as to what information was communicated and how it was communicated.

Key "frontline" staff including designers, project managers and middle managers were selected for the survey (N = 12 or 10% of total staff involved in the restructure), as these staff were in positions requiring extensive liaison among both faculty and Departmental staff and therefore had both more opportunity and more need to be informed through formal and informal mechanisms. Being frequently questioned by both external academic clients and internal colleagues about the restructure, the selected participants were compelled to maintain a high level of cognisance regarding the process, future directions and potential impact on themselves and their clients.

The survey questions designed are detailed in Table 1, below. Although designed in 2004, the questions can also be viewed as referring to common rumour types - for example there is some correlation with the rumour types identified by Bordia et al (2006) in their analysis of rumours during organisational change at a large hospital.



Table 1: Survey Questions Classified as per Bordia's Classification of Rumour Types

Survey Question	Rumour type as per Bordia et al. (2006)
How much information are you receiving (do you need to receive) regarding how your role has changed?	Changes to job and working conditions
How much information are you receiving (do you need to receive) regarding how the strategy and new structure are linked?	Nature of organizational change
How much information are you receiving (do you need to receive) regarding how decisions affecting changes to my role and others' were reached.	Changes to job and working conditions
How much information are you receiving (do you need to receive) regarding major management decisions?	Nature of organizational change
How much information are you receiving (do you need to receive) regarding what information clients have about the regeneration?	Poor change management
How much information are you receiving (do you need to receive) regarding how responsibilities and authority are distributed across the department?	Nature of organizational change

### About the Authors

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Liz Heathcote has held a variety of positions in the education and private sector in Melbourne, Brisbane, France, Singapore and Vancouver as high school teacher, instructional designer, project manager, manager of educational software, technical services manager and change manager. In addition to an MBA, she has qualifications in education and IT.

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